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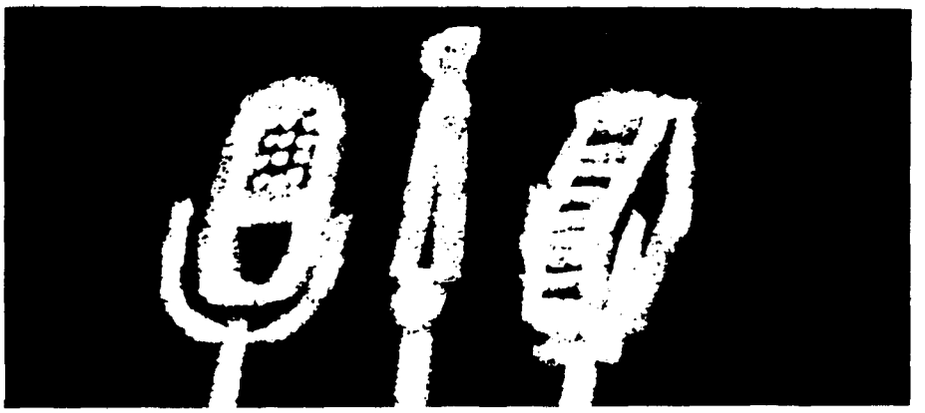

ST. CHARLES
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Making the unconscious conscious

Richard Kostelanetz

DREAM CITY (ALMOST)

Harvey Cox

CARDINAL SPELLMAN, CHARLES DAVIS

J. M. Cameron

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NEWS AND VIEWS

Two January 3rd headlines (probably unrelated):

REAGAN SWORN IN
AS GOVERNOR

LBJ DECLARES
CALIFORNIA A
DISASTER AREA

•

Expansive new year greetings from the New York *Daily News* (Editorial, Dec. 31):

"For 1967 we wish all the people in the free world all the best . . . all the slaves in the Communist slave nations all the best too . . . and the Red slavemasters in those nations an early take-off for Hell, as the only good Red is a dead Red."

•

A letter sent to Pope Paul by James H. Forest, co-chairman of the Catholic Peace Fellowship:

"Your Holiness:

"I write to you because I was deeply troubled to learn, upon returning from a Christmas retreat, that the Apostolic Delegate to this country, Archbishop Vagnozzi, has made public his personal support of the American military position in Vietnam.

"In a talk delivered in Kansas City, the Archbishop is reported to have stated, 'Unless the Communists are stopped, it is a great danger that the aggression might be expanded to other countries.'

"The Kansas City *Times*, in reporting the story, began its report: 'The titular head of Roman Catholicism in this country, the apostolic delegate to the United States, gave unflinching support yesterday to America's policy in Southeast Asia.'

"It had been my impression from reading the various statements that the Holy See considered itself a peacemaker in the dispute, not a partisan. I continue to believe this is the position your Holiness clings to at this moment of profound crisis and human agony.

"It would therefore seem a betrayal of responsibility for your representative in this country to say something which seems to disregard the spirit and letter of your many utterances, not to say a betrayal of the entire spirit and letter of the Gospels themselves. . . ."

•

The power of heredity (Auberon Waugh, writing "A Christmas Sermon" in *National Review*):

"A case could be made for saying that when President Kennedy allowed American grain to be sold to Russia he was motivated by humanitarian concern for the suffering Russians. True good will would have allowed them to continue suffering. The reason for their suffering lay in the oppressive and incompetent agricultural system which is decreed by Communist doctrine. By alleviating the harsh consequences of that doctrine, he encouraged it to survive."

•

Father Gregory Baum on religious obedience (from *Continuum*): "The conciliar documents have consistently refused to use biblical passages referring to obedience as surrender to God to illustrate the meaning of religious obedience. Second, because of the rational and human character of religious obedience the conciliar document on religious life insists that superiors should inform, in as much as this is possible and prudent, those over whom they are in charge, of the reasons for the orders they give. . . . Obedience is a human activity and should therefore be based, as much as this is possible in a given situation, on the reasons which determined the choice.

Third, according to the teaching of Vatican II, the ideal relationship between superiors and subjects in religious life should include dialogue. . . . Vatican Council II introduced dialogue into the exercise of obedience and thereby considerably changed the ideal of obedience in the Catholic Church. Fourth, according to the teaching of Vatican II, in the ideal religious community all the members participate in the making of policy. . . . The authority remains where it was, in the superiors; but the exercise of this authority will undoubtedly change."

•

Cardinal Cardijn, the 84-year-old founder of the Young Christian Worker movement, was given a foot-stomping mini-skirted welcome by 3,000 young YCW members at a London rally. The program included folk-singing and a short play portraying the impediments thrown in the way of young Father Cardijn when he founded YCW. The play included this bit of dialogue: "If you are a loyal Catholic and priest, you do not argue with a bishop; you merely find ways of outmaneuvering him."

•

"Where Are the Catholic Catholics?", an article by William Farrell in the December *Anselmian News* (St. Anselm's College, Manchester, N.H.) reports the disappointing results of a survey examining attitudes toward the liturgy among Catholic students at college.

"When I attend Mass I feel a deep sense of private meditation"—a probe to determine whether the old individualistic piety had given way to the Vatican Council's insistence on the public, communal nature of the liturgy—was strongly endorsed by 56 percent of the students; only 9 percent strongly rejected it. Fifty-one percent thought it was sinful or irreverent to chew the host; only twenty percent were able to properly identify the Epistle; less than half considered the Mass "an important thing to do as a Catholic."

In general, the students were individualistic and passive, generally in favor of liturgical reform, but not very informed or interested in the subject. The St. Anselm's sociology department conducted the survey in the spring of 1965 among 2,368 incoming freshmen at Wheeling (West Va.), Emmanuel (Boston), Notre Dame (Belmont), DePaul (Chicago), St. Anselm's, and Newman Hall, Iowa U.

JOHN LEO

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CORRESPONDENCE

"Dominican Rewrite"

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I have just had read to me your excellent editorial, "Dominican Rewrite" (Dec. 9), in which you commented critically on John Bartlow Martin's *Overtaken by Events*, and Adolph Berle's review of it in the New York *Times Book Review*.

You performed a very real service to us all by your calm and exceedingly well-supported criticism of the book, and more especially of Mr. Berle's review. This is the more important since President Johnson's Dominican-type intervention is quite likely to serve as a precedent for him and his successors if it is to be greeted with the kind of approval Adolph Berle gives it.

While I was not in the Dominican Republic during the revolution, various circumstances have given me a rather close touch with events in that afflicted land. I knew Juan Bosch rather well, well enough emphatically to deny Mr. Berle's assumption that he was, if not a lieutenant, then a dupe of Castro's.

NORMAN THOMAS

Vietnam Editorial

Webster, N.Y.

To the Editors: I admire your editorial declaration that the United States should get out of Vietnam ("Getting Out," Dec. 23). I agree that the war is, in the profound sense, unjust. The most recent American message to U Thant may produce a better climate for negotiations, but there is little indication of much improvement. Halting the bombing of North Vietnam would help.

PETER S. STUTZ

West Caldwell, N.J.

To the Editors: Your basic thesis is that this is an unjust war because the evil outweighs the good and the United States, therefore, should get out. This evaluation has the simplistic, moralistic flavor which you often properly decry in others.

(Continued on page 434)

NEWS & VIEWS: 414 **CORRESPONDENCE: 415**
EDITORIALS: 415
THE POPE AND MR. DOOLEY ON JAZZ MASSES: *John B. Mannion* **416**
CARDINAL SPELLMAN, CHARLES DAVIS: *J. M. Cameron* **417**
MARSHALL McLUHAN: *Richard Kostelanetz* **420**
DREAM CITY (ALMOST): *Harvey Cox* **426**
THE SCREEN: *Philip T. Hartung* **428**
BOOKS: 429

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BOMBING AND 'FADEOUT'

U Thant has again indicated that genuine possibilities of negotiations between Washington and Hanoi could spring from a cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam. Two North Vietnamese officials have made statements, though hardly clear ones, which indicate a slightly changed Hanoi attitude toward negotiations—dependent, however, on a halt in the bombing. Harrison Salisbury's reports from the North and the Pentagon's fumblings over the bombing of Hanoi have raised new doubts about the effects, both on civilian populations and on the war efforts as well, of the Northward forays. In short, there is very good reason to call off the bombers. Washington's inability to do so shows how deeply it is mired down in a Vietnam swamp of its own making.

One reason Washington hesitates to do the sensible thing is its fear of the hawks. The military is already chafing under the present restrictions on air power in Vietnam. The editor of *Air Force and Space Digest* reports that "there are few men in the Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines who agree with the way air power is being used in Vietnam." He gives notice that "the inevitable Congressional hearing will start before the winter is over, fed to some extent by dedicated men of all services who have taken pen in hand."

Even more important is the fact that the State Department appears to be pursuing a strategy in which negotiations are neither expected nor particularly desired. Surely not the only view to be found in the government, it is nevertheless the dominant one at the moment. It is called "fadeout" by Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge, but in fact it is a complicated and self-deceiving way of describing complete victory.

Lodge expressed the view in a TV interview from Washington. Predicting that 1967 will see military gains that are "sensational," he stated his skepticism about the possibility of open negotiations. Opposing an end to the bombing, Lodge spoke of the enemy fading away once Hanoi realized that "the jig is up." Then shifting to a less bellicose stand, he described a kind of mutual de-escalation: "they say we will stop this, you stop that, and we both stop and watch whether the other fellow is stopping."

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That Lodge's position, in all its ambiguity, is that of the State Department shows up in State's reaction to the slight changes in Hanoi's posture, which some observers saw in North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong's interview with Harrison Salisbury. Senator Mansfield said Premier Dong's statement "could well be the sign which the Administration has said from time to time it is seeking" before a bombing halt is ordered. Ambassador Goldberg spoke only of a generalized "response toward peace from North Vietnam." But the State Department was quite explicit about what it was looking for. It repeated once more that bombing could be stopped only after Hanoi promised "a corresponding and appropriate de-escalation on the other side." Not a promise of negotiations, then, but of de-escalation. Until that comes, bombs away!

The "fadeout" theory has a certain cool reasonableness. Actually its odor of *realpolitik* only disguises its unstated assumption: at the end of the game, after each player has removed his pieces, one by one, the U.S. will have the last man on the board. (Probably Marshal Ky.)

"Fadeout" as played by the Pentagon means that both sides will remove their forces—just as long as Hanoi and the Vietcong remove them a little faster. The fact is that Hanoi and the Vietcong have no reason to want to play this game. Which means, of course, the U.S. must convince them. Which means in turn that we must go on with the long and bloody and cruel war which negotiations might end. That is why both America and North Vietnam are, in fact, fading in, not out, at the moment. That is why Washington won't stop bombing in order to get negotiations under way. "Fadeout" is rigged for Hanoi to lose. It ends up as a loser's game all around.

THE POWELL CASE

One might be allowed a certain grudging admiration for the consummately suave gall of Rep. Adam Clayton Powell. Not many ordained ministers would have the nerve to reply to a comment about their high style of living that "it all comes from serving Jesus." Not many Congressmen would be so indifferent about press revelations of their wrongdoing or so apparently unconcerned about organized attempts to knock them down. No doubt Mr. Powell's unique personality explains some of his insouciance; he is obviously a nervy man. But he is also shrewd and knows well enough that his position and style have what is normally a gilt-edged credit card behind them: the fact that he has been, year in and year out, the overwhelming choice of the people in his district. In politics, that's tough to argue against.

Yet that is just what his Congressional critics are, in effect, proposing to argue against, and he is in serious trouble. His conduct in Congress has not been admirable. The case against him as a fit representative is a strong one; indeed, it is not easy to imagine a much stronger one. If that case were the only thing to be taken into account, then, the issue would be a fairly simple one. It is just impossible to defend Congressman Powell's conduct.

But the issue is not that simple. Mr. Powell is undeniably the man his constituents want serving them. To unseat him would be to deny them their right to choose the man they feel speaks for their interests. Moreover, as the best known Negro in Congress, Mr. Powell has a powerful symbolic role in the Negro community. Should he be denied his seat or in some other way severely punished, white men will be responsible. However good their case (and it is good), the punishment will not be understood as an instance of impartial justice at work (and Mr. Powell's skill at demagoguery will make certain it is not understood). This symbolic role has to be given some weight; it explains why a responsible man like A. Philip Randolph can (however uncomfortably) defend Mr. Powell.

It is uncertain then, that Congress should be given the power to sit in judgment on legally elected representatives, at least so far as their right to a seat goes. It is even more doubtful that it should single out Mr. Powell for special attack at this moment (most of his misdeeds are not unique in Congress, but his symbolic role among Negroes almost is). A good deal less doubtful, however, is the right of Congress to judge his committee work. That work directly affects the over-all functioning of the House. Since his record is notoriously bad there, his colleagues would not seem to have been unreasonable in stripping him of his chairmanship.

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The Pope and Mr. Dooley on Jazz Masses

(With sincere apologies to Finley Peter Dunne)

"I see by the papers that the Pope is against them Jazz Masses," opened Hennessy as he approached the bar.

"That's right, and more," confirmed Dooley, "he's also against Mass in the home and all sorts of turrible abuses."

"Well, I suppose that puts a crimp in them changes they've been talkin' about."

"Hennessy, ye never did understand the Church, bein' brought up in public schools as ye were and all. Ye didn't have the advantage of learnin' the best in Catholic pastimes fer rainy days," Dooley charged.

"And what are you talkin' about now," the skeptical Hennessy countered, "another of your silly jokes?"

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"Not atall," said Dooley, "I'm talkin' about a very serious game called Curia Poker. Grown men make a career of it, Hennessy, and every lad ever to enter a seminary thinks he's an expert at it, but it's the amachures who have the most fun withit. Of course, amachures or professional, the game's the thing, for every pot goes to the dealer no matter what. It's one of them crazy Italian rules. But if ye play yer cards right, Hennessy, ye can sometimes get the other feller to tip his hand, and the look on his face when he knows you know is worth every penny it costs to stay in the game."

With patience leaving him in sighs, Hennessy moaned, "And what does all that blather have to do with the Pope and jazz Masses?"

"Hennessy, Hennessy, pay attention, lad. Didn't the famous Vatican Council decide that the Church was to be run by collegiality as they called it? I mean that all the bishops had a share and a say in running things. And didn't they set up a kind of committee to work out all the liturgical changes and didn't they make it international to be sure it would dacently represent what people outside Italy thought? Well now, accordin' to the rules of Curia Poker, the Romans have got to throw out a few cards that make it look like they're still winnin' and have a full house. Until lately, it wasn't thought polite to call their bluff but there are some new players in the game now and they 're writin' some new rules.

"Take this Mass-in-the-home business. Was that statement done up on consultation with the whole international committee or do you think the lads in Rome spoke for the rest of the bunch without their knowin' about it? And another thing, if ye had yer glasses on when ye read the whole statement—if ye read the *whole* statement—ye saw that all it said was that the bishops are to lay down the ground rules for Masses outside regular churches. Well, there's nothing new there, Hennessy. Any bishop who's pushin' the idea of gettin' the Mass closer to the people and givin' them a chance to experience it fresh and intimate-like can go on doin' so. And as for the priests who are goin' beyond the rubrics and laws, Hennessy, in droppin' the old vestments and the little gestures and all, well, they're technically wrong and they know it and another wail of Roman protest probably won't help or hurt any of the parties involved.

"While I'm on the subject—and while ye finish that beer, Hennessy—let me enlighten ye a whit on that musical uproar. The only types that can rail against jazz and guitars and folk music are types highly educated to believe that some sounds are holy, Hennessy, and some sounds are not. If they're right, then God have mercy on them orientals with their weird strings and gongs, and on them African drummers and gourd-shakers and on all the music-makers outside of Europe. Ye'd think God took a music appreciation course at the Sistine Chapel and signed a pledge not to listen to anythin' his teachers didn't like.

"Ah, it's an old argument, Hennessy, but nobody's interested any more except them inveterate card-players in Rome. Maybe this time somebody will trump their play (I told you it was a crazy game)."

"Dooley, ye've got a strange way of lookin' at things and I suspect ye didn't learn it in yer penny catechism. But tell me, since ye are such a student of the game, what's goin' to happen here in the good old U.S.A.?"

"Nothin' atall, Hennessy, nothin' atall. There'll be some nervous bishops, a few gleeful musicians (who went to the same school as God), and a number of cases of self-righteous tongue-cluckin.' Fact o' the matter is, that fuss doesn't really have anything special to do with us at all. We'll see but a few reverberations, Hennessy, from the same crowd as catches cold whenever Rome sneezes."

In exasperation, poor Hennessy cried, "But the Pope, Dooley, it was the Pope who was behind this!"

"Ah," said Mr. Dooley, "some day we'll talk about who speaks for the Pope, Hennessy, and maybe some day we'll even hear from himself on that fascinatin' subject."

JOHN B. MANNION

(Mr. Mannion is executive secretary of the Liturgical Conference, Washington, D.C.)

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FROM BRITAIN

Cardinal Spellman, Charles Davis

Americans may be a little tired of being told how their war in Vietnam looks from Europe. I should not have taken up this theme once again had it not been for two events: Cardinal Spellman's sermon on Christmas Eve; and Mr. Harrison Salisbury's dispatches to the New York *Times*.

That Cardinal Spellman should have called the Vietnam conflict "a war for civilization" or said that "less than victory is inconceivable" does not, of course, occasion any surprise in those who have followed the Cardinal's career and noted his past expressions of opinion. On the contrary, any departure from his role as court chaplain, at any rate in the field of foreign policy, would be extremely surprising. What gives his remarks their special flavor is the fact that they are uttered at the very time when Pope Paul is striving to bring about a negotiated settlement and an end of the war on terms honorable to both sides if satisfactory to neither.

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Mr. Salisbury's dispatches, too, do not contain anything in the nature of revelations. It has been known for some time what the effects of the new bombing policy have been. What puzzles Europeans is the passivity of American opinion.

The agony of Vietnam has persisted for twenty-five years and has now reached a new degree of intensity. More deaths, more mutilations, more wasted villages and towns, more men and women corrupted in the ever more prosperous brothels of Saigon, the Ky Government sinking deeper into a morass of incompetence and popular contempt. And to what end? Even if the end proposed by the American Government—to demonstrate that "aggression does not pay"—were a reasonable one in itself, and it should be said that very few people here accept this simple account of what the war is about, the price paid already is too high; and the goods have not been delivered.

This is a filthy and barbarous war and can only be sustained by a people so decent and humane as the mass of Americans are by a process of self-deception. Father Daniel Berrigan has described this process in *They Call Us Dead Men*. "A climate of war creates its own horizons, its own justification and method. Subjected to such an atmosphere for a long period of time, men come to accept it as normal and self-evident; they create a logic that suits their state of soul. They create tools of violence as entirely normal methods of dealing with 'the enemy'; once created, the tools are used with ever-increasing ease. Peaceableness, communication with others, discussion, public candor—these are less and less trusted as methods of dealing with human differences . . . . Such men live in the dream-world of the schizoid or the adolescent . . . . The stranger becomes the enemy; the enemy is everywhere. His image tends more and more to harden into an absolute, beyond redemption, beyond change, implacable, unappeasable. And almost inevitably . . . a complementary image of ourselves arises. We become the beleaguered defenders of all that is good and noble in life, the society that can do no wrong, whose interventions are always governed by superior wisdom, whose military might serves only the good of humanity."

On his arrival in Manila on December 28, Cardinal Spellman was asked by reporters if his Christmas Eve remarks were meant to rule out the possibility of a negotiated peace. His reply was memorable, and a wonderful illustration of the frame of mind depicted by Father Berrigan: "Total victory means peace." What is singular, but characteristic of the sub-Christian Catholicism shown by such a remark, is that the man who, it is not too much to say, treats Pope Paul with manifest contempt in the field of foreign policy, would be the most obedient instrument of curial policy in the dogmatic field. In this way the case of Cardinal Spellman brings out all that is problematic in the Catholicism of our day, here in Europe as well as in the United States.

Catholicism can be taken as a religion that is concerned with eternal salvation in such a way that what may be called the macroscopic problems of the human family are seen as having no relevance to what is really central, the salvation of the individual. The sacraments are understood as supernatural causal agents in their own right, the clergy as the custodians of magical powers. Salvation is the reward of obedience to the rules of personal morality, especially in the sexual field. Society in its macroscopic features—war and peace, civil rights and so on—is not the direct concern of men as Christians, except that there is a general duty of obedience to the established powers. In the discharge of this duty men may be called upon to do many things that, judged by the standards of personal morality, look pretty queer; but the religion of patriotism complements the religion of personal salvation and does not cut across it.

That Catholicism taken in this way is a corrupt and morally debilitating religion has in the modern world become very plain. This is illustrated by the passivity of the German Catholics in the Third Reich; by the conduct of the Algerian war by intensely patriotic, traditionally Catholic officers; and, only recently, by the Chicago mobs who jeered at priests and nuns who stepped outside their accustomed, quasi-magical role to show their concern for their Negro brethren. But the latest and strangest manifestation of such a view of Catholicism was the call for total victory, uttered on the eve of the festival of the Incarnation to men "bathed in the new light of the incarnate Word," as the collect for the second Mass of Christmas puts it, and in the midst of the supper of the Lord, the great sign of Divine love for the entire human family.

The Davis Case

By now Americans have heard of the severe loss the Church has suffered in the departure of Charles Davis, professor of theology at Heythrop, editor—and what a magnificent one—of the *Clergy Review, peritus* at the Vatican Council, and perhaps our most talented theologian. The news had a bitter irony for the present writer. He read it in the morning papers as he was on his way to

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the meeting of a committee, very much the fruit of *aggiornamento,* to discuss future relations between the seminaries and the universities. It was also the day when Christopher Butler, perhaps the most distinguished English presence at Vatican II and a man totally committed to reform and renewal, was consecrated bishop in Westminster Cathedral. There must have been heavy hearts at the ceremony, not least that of the new bishop.

Father Davis' statement was theologically more naive than one would have expected. If the claim of the Church rests upon no adequate historical or biblical basis, then it might be thought that the other matters to which he adverts, such as the lack of freedom, don't arise. One might in any case want to quarrel, indeed, one might have learned from Father Davis' own work to quarrel, with the whole exposition of the Christian mystery in terms of historical and biblical foundation and cultic and dogmatic superstructure that seems here to be presupposed. Again, his statement said: "I have come to see that the Church as it exists and works at present is an obstacle in the lives of committed Christians I know and admire. It is not the source of values they cherish and promote." Who can ever have supposed that "the Church as it exists and works at present" could be the source of values for the Christian? This source (it seems strange to have to say this out loud, so to speak) is Jesus Christ himself, of whom the institutional Church is at any moment of time the *sign,* whose sacraments are His acts, if they are anything at all. History makes it impossible for us to suppose that there is always even a remote correspondence between office and personal sanctity, between the Church as the community of love it is called to be and the Church considered as a quasi-political apparatus.

If the Church ceased altogether to be the Church of saints and martyrs, if the works of love were never manifested in institutional form, then we might indeed despair. But this is notoriously not so in our own time. Quite apart from the extraordinary outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the Second Vatican Council, an event those of us in middle life had dreamed of but never expected to see, we have received quite extraordinary gifts, rich beyond imagination. Out of the blood and filth of our epoch wonderful witnesses to the truth have appeared: John XXIII, Franz Jägerstätter, Maximilian Kolbe, many others who could be named and many others known only to their immediate neighbors and to God. We have seen great princes of the Church, to all appearances men of the apparatus, suddenly change and utter the words of prophecy. (Cardinal Léger is an obvious example.) We have seen the dwindling of obscurantism in Catholic history and biblical scholarship. Of course, all such phenomena are accompanied, as the Marxists would say, by contradictory phenomena, and these have plainly weighed heavily upon Charles Davis.

It has to be said—I do not say that this is the case with Charles Davis, though his decision will be exploited by those I have in mind—that the thought of many liberal Catholics is marked by what I can only call a querulous romanticism. Davis himself has never, hitherto, gone in for this. In some respects he has been a rather conservative theologian. He reviewed *The Future of Catholic Christianity,* a poor and rather silly book that scarcely merited his attention, in terms that would not have been strange coming from Cardinal Ottaviani. One of the last pieces he wrote for the Catholic press was a subtle, to my mind over-subtle, defense of the discipline of celibacy. The romanticism shows itself in a refusal to reckon with the inertia of institutions and a failure to see that the work of reform must be costly and painful. At its worst it characterizes those whose liberal Catholicism seems to consist largely in reading the right books and newspapers and jeering at bishops. At its best it shows itself in the young lions of the *Slant* group whose eschatological impatience is so great that they want to identify the proletarian revolution with the immediate signs of the *Parousia.* The serious thing about this kind of romanticism is that its victims or proponents would tend to welcome a campaign of witch-hunting and repression, if this were to be provoked by the Davis affair. It would confirm their hypotheses about the ecclesiastical apparatus and would reinforce the feelings of inner satisfaction that go with the consciousness of being members of a beleaguered minority in a society where the anathemas of the Church have no serious social consequences (for the laity).

For those in authority the case of Charles Davis may provide a temptation or a lesson. The temptation is to slow down the pace of reform, to inhibit free discussion, to maintain Catholic solidarity, so far as the clergy are concerned, by the use of traditional methods. This temptation will not easily be yielded to. There are certainly many bishops who are frightened or irritated by the manifold consequences of Vatican II, from liturgical changes to the exercise of free speech in the Church. But there are others who are seriously committed to reform and who will certainly read the lesson. This, briefly, is that sensitive and intelligent men under pressure may do strange things. Frankness, openness, confidence, above all, the spirit of fraternal charity, these can effect miracles and can retain for the service of the Church men who will otherwise abandon their vocations in despair or fall into melancholy and apathy. No doubt such men are not free from blame. Newman lived, with a radiant faith, the greater part of his Catholic life under a dark cloud of suspicion, a victim of duplicity and malice. He was content to look to posterity; and his confidence has indeed been justified. But to suppose that what was for Newman an occasion for greatness will provide the ordinary run of men with a morally bracing regime is itself a kind of romanticism. We must pray that our rulers will be realists.

J. M. CAMERON

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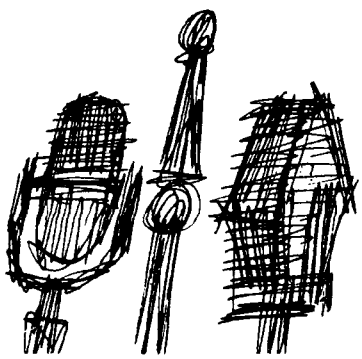
MARSHALL McLUHAN

He sees significance where others see only data

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ



One tends to be content to attribute importance to what is measurable merely because it happens to be measurable
—Karl Mannheim

Marshall McLuhan's two recent books are an intellectual necessity, but hardly a critic's delight. They repel the impatient reader. Their sentences are generally clumsy, despite scattered passages of high grace and true wit; the paragraphs are carelessly constructed; his thoughts are so diffusely organized that the book's pages need not be read chronologically. Moreover, the ideas are so orignal that they often evade immediate comprehension; and McLuhan's presentation of his insights at first seems arbitrary in manner and excessively dogmatic in tone. To make matters more difficult still, *Understanding Media* often inspires an animus (unjustified, I believe) in people excessively committed to the culture of print. Still, since these are books that must be assimilated, it is nothing but scandalous that between the few short reviews and the numerous profiles in the popular press, the anxious puffs and the ill-considered demolitions, truly open and discriminating criticism of McLuhan's hypotheses has been sparse.

In his first work, *The Mechanical Bride* (1951), needlessly out-of-print and exorbitantly expensive on the used-book markets, McLuhan explains his "method" as adapting the analytical techniques of modern art criticism to the study of both popular culture and society itself; and like the best art criticism, his original insights are most adept at illuminating forms other eyes have missed—when they literally render the invisible visible.

In the opening pages of *The Mechanical Bride*, McLuhan perceives, "It is on its technical and mechanical side that the front page [of newspapers] is linked to the techniques of modern science and art. Discontinuity is in different ways a basic concept of both quantum and relativity physics. It is the way in which a Toynbee looks at civilization, or a Margaret Mead at human cultures. Notoriously, it is the visual technique of a Picasso, the literary technique of James Joyce." In addition to being indubitably true in its individual perceptions, this passage, as it incorporates a wide range of examples, succeeds in identifying a central overarching characteristic of the contemporary sensibility. I would place it among the most illuminating passages in all modern criticism.

In *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, perhaps McLuhan's most coherently realized book, he offers the following broad insight into the impact of print on the culture of Western man: "The visual [the perceptual mode of the man raised on print] makes for the explicit, the uniform, and the sequential in painting, in poetry, in logic, in history. The non-literate modes are implicit, simultaneous, and discontinuous, whether in the primitive past or in the electronic present." Here McLuhan transcends his earlier insight by explaining why contemporary culture should find discontinuity a more congenial organizing principle than causality.

Unlike *The Mechanical Bride*, realized as just a series of explanatory glosses, the two more recent books embody significant theses about the major causes of historical change and the radical character of contemporary civilization. Adopting a mode of explanation I can only christen, against his objections, "technological determinism," McLuhan suggests that the invention of a certain, crucially relevant tool or machine initiates huge trans-

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ *edited* The New American Arts *(Horizon) and* On Contemporary Literature *(Avon).*

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formations in the physical environment, man's social relations, and his perception of experience. For instance, McLuhan surmises that the railroad, in centralizing commerce and transportation around depots, historically shaped the structure of the cities, the character of urban social life, and the peculiar sensibilities of city people; however, the automobile initiated similarly widespread changes in developing the suburbs where houses are accessible largely, if not entirely, through private transportation. With the crossing of the new technology with the old environment—when the automobile enters the city—the result is chaos.

Pursuing this principle of technological determinism, McLuhan develops a more specific scheme of historical explanation, which I would call "informational technological determinism." Here he suggests that a radical change in the dominant technology of communication is the prime initiating force behind human change. By weaving a mosaic of examples (which offer a theme), rather than developing an argument (which would offer a thesis), he suggests in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* that the invention of movable type, which made the printing press possible, radically transformed the culture of Western man, producing phenomena as various as the predominantly visual orientation of the man who prefers print, the linear structure that superseded the repetitious forms of medieval art, a kind of music abstractly divorced from the art's origins in speech, a Protestant religion made possible by the book's capacity to induce individual revelation, the psychological mode of inner-direction, the epistemology of causal explanations, and the mechanical technology that created man's sense of alienation from his environment.

As an interpretation of cultural history, McLuhan's scheme contributes to the contemporary quarrel with those traditional methods of historiography which emphasize, for example, politicians or "great men" as the prime movers, economic factors as predominantly determining, and the mind as a stronger force than matter. The theme of technological determinism is hardly McLuhan's invention. What is original is McLuhan's outrageous comprehensiveness—his willingness to interpret so many aspects of experience as shaped by technologies of communication—as he weaves the diverse observations of others (extensively quoted and credited) into a moderately coherent whole.

Electricity Ends Sequence

In *Understanding Media*, very much the sequel to *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, McLuhan's theme is that the new electronic communications technologies of the twentieth century are the determining force in shaping modern culture. Telegraph, telephone, radio, television, automation have radically transformed all experience ranging from social organization to human perception of space and time; for just as the telephone significantly speeds the flow of business, so television makes all news current. Whereas the predominant organizing principle of print culture was linear—introduction, development, and conclusion—contemporary culture is characterized by repetition, juxtaposition, overlap and disjunction. "Electricity," writes McLuhan, "ended sequence by making things instant; it is the new mosaic form of the TV image that has replaced the Gutenberg structural assumptions." Electronic media also downgrade the visual capacity by requiring multi-sensory comprehensions—aural and kinetic as well as visual—as in the movies, and now television.

Unlike intellectuals who condemn the mass media completely—the larger the mass the more vehement the condemnation—or look at them only as an occasion to damn them again, McLuhan was among the first North American intellectuals to investigate precisely what the new media implied and how their forms would affect people. Essentially, McLuhan recognizes that the new media represent "extensions of man"; as such, they embody both opportunity and threat. First, they increase the range of man's control and impact over his environment—the telephone extends the voice and ear; all switches and dials extend the power of thought. Yet they also increase the environment's potential power over him.

Most of *Understanding Media* is devoted to McLuhan's examination of the major electronic media to define the peculiar character of each, which is to say its limitations and possibilities in communication, as well as the ways it characteristically handles experience. Here the techniques of art criticism are crucially useful, because they illuminate forms that might otherwise remain unperceived.

To define, first, the nature of the medium's expression and, second, the interaction of a medium with human attention, McLuhan posits the descriptive terms of "hot" and "cool." The former word identifies media (or experiences or people) with highly defined contents—a considerable amount of detailed information. Instances include a movie screen or a page of print. Low-definition or "cool" media offer only outlines; examples include cartoons and television. Secondly, where a hot medium fosters detachment and skepticism, a cool medium requires that its audience mentally participate to complete the communication. Watching television, for instance, requires more concentration than mere looking, because the dots of the screen offer only outlines of figures; thus our brain literally learns to flesh in the characters on the screen. Similarly, conversation has a low definition—it is "cool"; a lecture is definitely hot.

Although most hot media create hot responses, a hot medium can be used to stimulate the cool, participational quality of television and *vice versa*. Alain Resnais' *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961) offers a cool experience in a hot medium; a play presented on radio has a cooler

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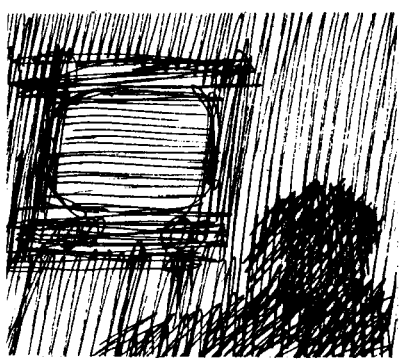
impact than it would in a theatrical performance (because it forces us to visualize the characters); a face-to-face argument creates a hot experience in the cool medium of human talk. Applying this distinction, McLuhan illuminates phenomena that others perceive but cannot explain, such as why the contents and effects of television are so different from those of either radio or movies. Whereas radio requires, for example, a performance of high definition—announcers attempt to develop a distinctive voice that is instantly recognizable—television favors performers of a definition so low they appear almost bland, like Jack Paar, Johnny Carson and Ed Sullivan.

Indeed, perhaps the most extraordinary quality of McLuhan's mind is that it discerns significances where others see only data or nothing; he tells us how to measure, in the Mannheim sense, phenomena previously unmeasurable. "What Parkinson hides from himself and his readers is simply the fact that [clerical staff always increases because] the main 'work to be done' is actually the movement of information." " 'Mass media,' 'mass entertainment' [are] useless phrases obscuring the fact that English itself is a mass medium." Most of his most perspicacious insights stem from considering how differences in the sensory ratios of a culture affect its cultural materials. One can imagine a Ph.D. thesis (if not several) slogged out of the following off-hand remark: "In [contemporary] literature only people from backward oral areas had any resonance to inject into the language—the Yeatses, the Synges, the Joyces, Faulkners and Dylan Thomases." "The printed book will naturally tend to become a work of reference rather than a speaking wisdom." Conversely, the advertising jingle contributes to the return to oral (and aural) guidance. "The unique character of our alphabet [is that, unlike idiograms or hieroglyphs, it] separates all meaning from the sounds of letters." These remarks resemble McLuhan's books; for they are more valuable for their stimulating insights that complement our understanding than for any final definitions of formative forces.

McLuhan and Brown

Because his perceptions penetrate beneath the surface of observations, McLuhan's ideas also have much in common with other radical tendencies in contemporary American thought. Like Buckminster Fuller and Herbert Marcuse, McLuhan recognizes that cybernation (the automation of work processes), as it eliminates work and increases leisure, promises to give nearly every man the opportunity to devote all his energies to the cultivation of his powers; and not only does McLuhan favor a guaranteed income (in Robert Theobald's anthology of that title), but he also envisions that continuous education will become the prime business of a future society.

Also, like Paul Goodman and Edgar Z. Friedenberg, McLuhan argues that today's conventional education hardly engages the interest of young people, largely because it insufficiently equips them for coping with the actualities of their world. "Our classrooms and our curricula," he writes in Charles R. Dechert's (ed.) *The Social Impact of Cybernetics*, "are still modeled on the old industrial environment. What is indicated for the new learning procedures is not the absorption of classified and fragmented data, but pattern recognition with all that that implies of grasping interrelationships." Like Herman Kahn and Norman O. Brown, McLuhan believes in thinking which is exploratory and speculative, rather than substantive and definitive; and the books of all three are products of men who do not necessarily believe in their thoughts. Just as Norman O. Brown insists in *Life Against Death* that he tries "merely to introduce some new possibilities and new problems into the public consciousness," by offering a series of unashamedly outrageous speculations, so Herman Kahn imagines "scenarios" to conjecture about future possibilities; and so McLuhan speculates about the impact of media. Finally, all three men are similar in that they offer not theses but themes.



Particularly in their grasp of the development of civilization, McLuhan and Brown posit similar ideas. In *Life Against Death*, Brown reinterprets the later thought of Sigmund Freud to suggest not only that the repressiveness of civilized society is the prime cause of neurosis but also that mankind, in the course of human history, is slowly eliminating instinctual repressions for a more fully libidinal existence. McLuhan parallels Brown by arguing that while mechanized society, derived in principle from print, alienates man from his environment, electronic media usher in the end of alienation, first, by extending man's senses into his surroundings; secondly, by favoring more participational, low-definition experiences; and, thirdly, by recreating that oral bond that tied primitive society together. In short, by locating the prime source of mental distress not in man but in his environment, both men predict that as changing society becomes more sympathetic to the human essence, most anxiety and neurosis will disappear.

Similarly, both thinkers predict the end of man's slavery to segmented time; for future man will have less

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awareness of past and future. "Both time (as measured visually and segmentally) and space (as uniform, pictorial, and enclosed) disappear in the electronic age of instant information," McLuhan writes; and Brown identifies the connection between timed existence and civilization's repression. "Only repressed life is in time, and unrepressed life would be timeless or in eternity." It follows that as man loses his sense of quantified time (and, thus, his conception of life as a series of stages), he develops a different attitude toward death. "Eternity," Brown writes, "is therefore a way of envisaging mankind's liberation from the neurotic obsession with the past and the future." McLuhan conjectures that the electronic media will return man to the pre-print perspective that views death as not a termination of existence but an extension of life into a different realm—literally, a life after life. (Indicatively, only non-print cultures can accept the idea of reincarnation.)

Most conspicuously absent from *Media* is any discussion of the future of sexual activity; but on this subject, I believe, McLuhan's implications correspond with Brown's ideas. The latter thinker envisions the decline of sexuality focused upon genital contact and a return to the "polymorphously perverse," unfocused, purely libidinal pleasure characteristic of the baby; McLuhan's thoughts suggest, by extension, that the focus upon genital pleasure, particularly upon the genital orgasm, is related to print; for not only does genital sexuality resemble reading in requiring a concentration of attention, but also its conception of pleasure is analogous to the reading of a traditional novel—a progressive heightening of tension to a total release. In contrast, polymorphous, omniattentive sensuality is formally analogous to the constant pleasures afforded by the electronic media, with their diffusion of attention and absence of climax; and just as the child's sexuality is "cool" and unfocused until society teaches him a "hot" genital orientation, so a baby's attention is unfocused until he learns to read print.

Indicatively, the sexual manuals of pre-print cultures, such as the *Kama Sutra,* espouse a notion of sexual pleasure considerably different from the predominantly genital (and orgasmic) preoccupations of Albert Kinsey and Wilhelm Reich. Sex in the future, both Brown and McLuhan suggest, will be more continuous or constant in time and more diffuse in its multiple erotogenic range. In these respects—the proliferation of pleasure, the disintegration of linear time, the increase in diverse libidinal pleasure—both Brown and McLuhan imagine a future similar to, as its participants describe it, the hallucinogen experience on a grand scale; and all together, these radical thinkers and actors suggest a future utopia on earth not unlike our traditional conceptions of heaven.

Not everything in McLuhan's books is true or perceptive; for McLuhan's methods for achieving insights frequently inspire incredible, if not inscrutable, leaps from reality. Some problems stem from his major theme that "the medium is the message," which is to say several things: first, the ultimate content of the medium is the medium itself; that is, people watch movies primarily for pleasures offered by a kinetic screen accompanied by relevant sound, just as people like reading for the joy of watching print pass before their eyes. Second, "it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action"; that is, communications media are the primary force in shaping a society. Third, the "message" of the medium is its impact upon society—the idea of informational technological determinism; that is, "the message of the movie medium is that of transition from lineal connection to configuration."

In the first sense, I believe McLuhan is largely wrong; for he completely discounts the question of what appears on the screen and speaker. As anyone who has ever watched movies knows, some of them are more interesting—more engaging and stimulating—than others (just as some are more soporific); and much of the difference depends upon the quality of what we traditionally call the program's "content." However, McLuhan is correct in implying that we are more tolerant of bad content in the media we favor; as a writer I can read most anything, whereas a bad movie either puts me to sleep or drives me out of the theater.

The second dimension of "The medium is the message" has considerably more truth. What McLuhan says here is that the medium determines the kinds of experience and information it can most propitiously present and, thus, what kinds of impact it can have. For philosophical exposition, for instance, the book is quite obviously the most viable medium; for it allows each reader to pursue the thought at his own pace as well as to recheck on earlier statement. Moreover, the second corollary says that as media shape the modes and situations of response—continuity or discontinuity; by oneself, or in a group—they influence ("shape" more than "control") human social life. Thus, he conjectures that TV and movies, where large numbers watch the same thing all at once, will institute retribalization; however, since media are often observed alone and since not everyone watches the same program, retribalization through TV alone would be unlikely. In short, then, where McLuhan's thesis of the medium and the message runs false is precisely in its exclusionary determinism. *The medium is not the entire message, just as it does not totally control the message.* What McLuhan does, here and elsewhere, is escalate a real insight into a fantastic iron-clad generalization; so that, only if one takes these grandiose statements with skepticism will one grasp the truths they have to offer.

McLuhan's mind is, by nature, more admissive than exclusionary; not only is it open to experience that other intellectuals either dismiss or neglect, but he also exhibits the tendency to admit all his own thoughts to print. Just

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as some of them are more comprehensible than others, so some are considerably more perceptive. What I fear is that many people impressed with the brilliance of so much will suspect that everything McLuhan says is true —even worse, true in precisely the way he says it.

Since even the author regards his insights as "exploratory probes," the reader must, of necessity, subject these perceptions to the most rigorous critical scrutiny. McLuhan is deeply indebted to James Joyce—indeed, floating around in *Media* is the nucleus of a brilliant critical book on Joyce's work (a task, I understand, he has passed on to his eldest son); and McLuhan has said, "Much of what I talk about is in *Finnegan's Wake*." The trouble is that in addition to taking his love of punning from Joyce, McLuhan adopts Joyce's most indulgent habits of thought. The organizing principle of the *Wake*, one remembers, is that one story is all stories—to put it differently, at the base of the novel's major actions is the tale of familial conflict. Thus, on the same page, Joyce writes about a range of filial relationships—England and Ireland, Eliot and Yeats, Romolus and Remus, Mutt and Jeff, Shem and Shaun, Greece and Rome, etc.

What Joyce did, then, was transcend the metaphoric relation—that one story is like another—for associations that, as they eliminate the metaphoric dimension completely, transform analogies into identities. McLuhan performs similar leaps, as he writes in *Media* that "The electric light is pure information." By this gnomic sentence, he intends a metaphoric meaning—that the electric light resembles an information medium in that it tells us about something else; without the light, we would not recognize the content it illuminates. However, such an elliptical statement obfuscates meaning, and such an inclusive intelligence loses its sense of discrimination—if they are so much like each other, then there would be no discernible difference between them.

This process of converting correspondences into identities (which, indicatively, also informs Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body*) accomplishes, metaphorically, a transubstantiation, a doctrine which generally separates the post-print Protestant intelligence from the pre-print Catholic; where the former says the bread *represents* the body of Christ, the latter rules that, at a certain point in the Mass, that it *is* the body of Christ. What may rationalize McLuhan's inclusive logic, perhaps, is his notion that differentiation and classification are modes typical of the age of print; he quotes, for example, Phillip Aires' observation that the idea of "childhood" as a distinct stage did not arise until the seventeenth century.

In contrast, the contemporary modes, McLuhan feels, are inclusion and unification; and just as the avant-garde in each modern art overlaps into another—theater into dance with *The Brig* and Happenings and music into theatre with John Cage—so newspapers and mass magazines deny traditional difference by homogenizing all experience. Similarly, where uniformity in grammar and definitions is a product of print, the new writing, like much new art (and McLuhan's new scholarship), is less committed to traditional precision; and McLuhan's use of certain abstract words such as "myth" and "archetype" is highly idiosyncratic—perhaps more metaphoric than accurate. ("Printed grammars since the eighteenth century," writes McLuhan, "created a fog based on the concept of correctness.")

The major trouble with, say, the transformations of analogies into identities are, first, that they betray the experience we know—the light bulb is simply not an informational medium in the way television is—and, second, that such statements, as they defy precise analysis, corrupt the language of explanation. Until man ceases to recognize such crucial differences, perhaps (and only perhaps) an inevitable result of the electronic revolution, McLuhan errs in neglecting them. "You can prove nothing by analogy," Ezra Pound says in *ABC of Reading*, incidentally one of McLuhan's favorite books. "The analogy is either range-finding or fumble. Written down as a lurch toward proof . . . it leads mainly to useless argument." Alas, Pound, too, exaggerates his perception.

Concentric Patterns

Likewise Joycean is the circular structure of all McLuhan's books; for the principle he announces in *The Mechanical Bride*—"No need for it to be read in any special order"—is more or less applicable to his other books. McLuhan's rationale for such a procedure is buried in an extraordinary passage on page 26 of *Media*: "The Hebrew and Eastern mode of thought tackles problem and resolution, at the outset of a discussion, in a way typical of oral societies in general. The entire message is then traced and retraced, again and again, on the rounds of a concentric spiral with seeming redundancy. One can stop anywhere after the first few sentences and have the full message, if one is prepared to 'dig' it. [This] redundant form [is] inevitable to the electric age, in which the concentric pattern is imposed by the instant quality, and overlay in depth, of electric speed. But the concentric with its endless intersection of planes is necessary for insight. In fact, it is the technique of insight, and as such is necessary for media study, since no medium has its meaning or existence alone, but only in constant interplay with other media."

This I consider among McLuhan's most disturbing ideas; and although I recognize that presentation and arguments are rhetorically tied to the linear form, I am not sure, as McLuhan is, that insight is instantaneous. A full understanding of any process, whether of complicated mechanisms or complex ideas, requires some form of successive thought; and if the process is to be effectively communicated, the writer (or speaker) should use developmental syntax.

The most obvious criticism of McLuhan's interpreta-

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tions is his rampaging tendency to over-explain. Not only are his ideas too deterministic, not only does he facilely transform analogies into identities, not only does he tend to encompass all other interpretations of experience within his own (rather than arguing against them), but he ties up his materials into a package too neat for their realities. Quite often, he becomes the victim of his own ideas, conjuring his interpretations through highly resistant evidence.

Much of his prophecy stems from the speculation that as man overcomes his slavery to literacy, he will attain a sensibility similar to that of primitive man; thus, McLuhan creates a dialectical vision of history by continually referring to pre-print experience (thesis) for his images of the present and future (synthesis) that contrasts with the age of print (antithesis). He notes in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* that soon after the impact of print, music became divorced from its origins in song (and speech); therefore, by expecting that all important contemporary music will complete the circle, McLuhan asserts in *Media* that not only does jazz have its origins in speech but also that, "Schoenberg and Stravinsky and Carl Orff and Bartok, far from being advanced seekers of esoteric effects, seem to have brought music very close to the conditions of ordinary human speech." This may be true for Orff, it might be somewhat true for Bartok; but as for Schoenberg, the remark has nothing to do with his central contribution to contemporary musical thought. In fact, serial music is so abstract, so divorced from speech, that an accurate description of its methods forbids extrinsic analogies.

At another point, McLuhan conjures that since pre-print art was corporate and anonymous in authorship, so will be post-print art. However, TV is corporate less because of the nature of the medium than the existing practices for making programs, and the greatest films, except perhaps the Marx Brothers, reveal the touch of an individual director. The point is that once society develops a certain mode of conceptual awareness, it will not necessarily disappear when that society (or its communications technology) changes; historical memory persistently survives new situations. In one sense, McLuhan admits this tendency to exaggerate, insisting that as his ideas are just explorations he feels no need to defend them as scrupulously as a Ph.D. candidate would his thesis. On the other hand, as his dogmatic style and messianic tone subvert his more modest intentions, his lack of rigor makes him an easy target for debunking marksmen.

The point is that other forces beside media shape human experience, both contemporary and historical, as well as the experience of media. The drive for money, for instance, seems to be a universal quality, doled out in unequal measure; and McLuhan's ideas are unable to explain why they should be so. His chapter on money, probably the foggiest in *Media,* makes the obvious prediction that the credit card will replace printed money as the "currency" of the new age. However, these remarks fail to cope with the real importance of money in media; after all, as Harry J. Skornia demonstrates in *Television and Society* (1965), a book McLuhan curiously blurbed, the major inspiration behind television practice today is the possibilities of enormous profits, not the potentialities of the medium; and as McLuhan's commentary eschews the crucial question of media ownership, it cannot explain the vast and real differences between British radio and television and American.

Since McLuhan attempts to downgrade the power of politicians and political structures, he has little awareness of how they can, in fact, shape a considerable portion of our existence, even our relationship to the media. People cannot have television unless their state permits it; and governmental politics, as we note, often influence, if not control, the content of the programs, usually with scant awareness of the nature of the medium. Likewise absent from *Media* is any elaboration of Harold A. Innis' version of "the medium is the message"—that each new form of communication initiates a shift in political power. Furthermore, it is simply preposterous to say, "The Cold War is largely a conflict between cultures where different sense priorities prevail. The U.S. is eye-oriented. The Soviet Union, with its limited traditions of literacy, is ear-oriented." Similarly naive is McLuhan's prediction, perhaps self-ironic, that "If the 'Voice of America' suddenly switched to jazz, the Kremlin would have reason to crumble." In the end, McLuhan's insights into experience are, as I suggested before, more acceptable as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, other interpretations. He is innocent to omit economic activity, sexual desire and political forces in modern society, merely forgetting them will not make them go away.

Although McLuhan eschews political directives, *Understanding Media* strikes me as implicitly a most persuasive polemic for the necessity of communicatarian anarchism. McLuhan continually predicts that the electronic media and cybernation will produce the decentralization of society (perhaps because it fits into his dialectical scheme); however, he never quite explains how, in the age of networks and expanding government power, this "uniqueness and diversity" and "new world of autonomy and decentralization in all human affairs" will occur. Indeed, by implication, particularly in their images of a possible future, his books suggest that the only way to overcome the incipient nightmare of *1984* is through the dismantling of society to its natural boundaries of existing communities—the political separation of cities from their suburbias and both from the rural areas—and the creation of wholly autonomous communications media within each of these enclaves. McLuhan implies this when he writes, "Restraints of electric absolutist power can be achieved not by the separation of powers, but by a pluralism of centers." Such action, it seems to me, is not only a desirable political solution to

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this age of super-powers but also a spiritual necessity in an era of possible global conformity; and McLuhan confirms this prognostication by suggesting that rebellion will not attract sympathy unless it is instigated by a group for the sake of a *community* opposed to unjust authority.

As intellectual endeavors, McLuhan's books merit nothing but highest praise; in spite of their intrinsically high-definitional quality, they invite participation in their processes of thought, initiating not only dialogues between the reader and the book but between one reader and another. They are among the richest books of our time; and I doubt if any intelligent person can read them without being enlightened, if not influenced, in some way —educated to cope better with his present environment. Indeed, precisely because his thought presumes that mankind, by recognizing technology's importance, can overcome its determining power and shape the social environment to his needs, McLuhan is profoundly humanistic.

Amidst all their chaff, McLuhan's books contain much truth; more important, to many of us, they initiate an education—an awareness of significant dimensions previously hidden to us—as they make invisible visible and the unconscious conscious. Like other great native thinkers, McLuhan embodies that peculiarly North American capacity to push ideas, often derived from others, beyond conventional bounds to the wildest conclusions—literally levels beyond other minds in the same field—creating a book in which enormous good-sense and outright non-sense are so closely entwined; and in our post-Marxist, most-existentialist, post-Christian age, such exploratory thought is more valuable and necessary to our culture than another serving of time-worn ideas.

The Secular City

DREAM CITY (ALMOST)

HARVEY COX

If the city has become our world today, then the chance to build a whole new city from scratch must seem a little like being God. What delectation! To fashion a world without worrying about how the new will match the old or where the people displaced from the slums will reside while their Marina towers are being cantilevered? It is an urban planner's dream. Most of the problems that disturb his sleep are abolished *ab initio*. It is not quite the case that he merely waves his hand or speaks a word and a city appears. He does need to accumulate immense tracts of land and assemble a considerable pile of investment capital. But after that, it is really *creatio ex nihilo*: a metropolis arises from the meadows.

Or does it?

To find out about the city conjuring business I journeyed one day last fall to America's most interesting ready-mix metropolis, Reston, Virginia, and had a talk with Robert E. Simon, its originator.

Reston, named for its founder's initials, lies forty difficult miles from Washington along a frustratingly narrow road. But its commutation problems, a headache at the moment, are not a long-range worry for its planners. They do not want to see it become a commuter town anyway. They envision a self-sufficient community with enough industry to make it possible for all of its residents to work in Reston itself. Only about 1200 people live there today, but "nice, light, smokeless" industries are moving in apace and Mr. Simon expects his life-size Christmas tree village to reach its 80,000 population goal well within the ten years' target goal.

Today's Restonians have it made. Their single disadvantage is that they are stared at on Sunday by more visitors than are the residents of neighboring Virginia hamlets. But they live in a setting where the discriminating conservation of natural endowments and the genius of architectual imagination have produced a memorably handsome environment. If that sentence sounds like an excerpt from a Real Estate brochure it is because Reston makes you want to write one. Its tasteful town houses, livable open space, buzzing wharfside town center and variable jig-saw land-use patterning could turn even the most virulent critic of America's suburban self-deception into an ecstatic rhapsodist.

When he catches himself inwardly apostrophising Reston on a balmy autumn day, a devout city-lover like myself first experiences a twinge of self-doubt. But he quickly assuages his guilt with information he has picked up from Robert Simon and the Restonians themselves. First of all: Reston Is *Not* A Suburb. As we said before, it is a "self-contained city", or will be. It lacks, therefore, the dormitory ethos of Ardmore, Lexington, Chevy Chase. Also, many of Reston's houses are built as explicit denials of the suburban rubric that one needs at least an acre of private crab grass and dandelion around his house or he might as well stay in Greenpoint. Reston

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HARVEY COX, *author of* The Secular City, *here contributes another of his regular columns.*

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specializes in rowhouses, often six or eight in a row, costing $30,000 to $40,000. Each has a small patio behind it instead of a baseball diamond. By putting the houses close together such construction produces a net saving of several acres. This land is then pooled and used as common recreation space: woodland, tennis courts, meadows, bridle paths. In one of the villages, the land saved from several groups of row houses was flooded and the residents now have waterfront property on a lovely lake.

Reston combines some of the density and coziness of in-city living with the quiet and natural open space of the country. But as he walks its pedestrian paths or sips expresso at one of its sidewalk cafes, further doubts assail the visitor. Where is the racial and economic heterogeneity that makes a city a city? This is a problem Reston has not solved. There is one group obviously missing from Reston: the poor. And until Reston finds a way to include them it is hard to see how it can avoid turning into just one more gilded escape hatch from the realities of an urban society.

Low-Income Housing

No poor people live in Reston or anywhere near it. When I asked a Negro girl waitress at the golf club cafeteria if she lived in Reston her reply was, "You kiddin'?" Simon worries about this constantly. He wants to have low-income families in Reston, not only because it would be an *ersatz* world if he didn't but because as a businessman he knows hospitals need orderlies, restaurants need dishwashers and public schools need beginning teachers. And the money these people make will not buy or rent them anything in Reston today. Simon's solution to the problem reflects his businessman's approach. "Low-cost housing," he says, "has to cost low." He wants to find ways of building good houses that will sell for what low-income people can pay. He thinks research in new building materials, mass production of portable frames or some other technical advance will eventually provide the way out.

It may. But I doubt it. In failing to find an answer to the nagging embarrassment of housing for low-income families Simon has discovered that even building a new city in the wilderness does not extricate him from the structural sickness of American society as a whole. Poverty is not a problem of the city, one that can be solved by creating a new city. It is a fatal flaw in the larger system of which the city is only a part. Simon has discovered that he is not creating it out of the stuff provided by the world around Reston. And what world has not yet discovered how to put roofs over the heads of poor people.

So far Americans have tried four ways to shelter low-income people. The first is exhortation. Tell them to become middle-income people by working harder and straightening out their family life. A combination of upward exertion and occasional helping hands from above will vaporize poverty and the problem will be solved. This tactic has not worked. In the years since World War II the income distribution gap in our society has widened rather than narrowed. We still have the poor with us. And they still need houses.

Public housing by the federal government was another solution. The trouble is the federal government has never pursued this program seriously. Because of the combined pressures of private builders and fiscal conservatives, government efforts in public housing construction have been miniscule, hardly even token. More recently other voices have joined the established coalition against public housing. They claim it segregates and humiliates the poor. They certainly have a point.

The third, somewhat unconscious, but operative solution to housing for the poor has simply been to allow them to crowd into the older housing abandoned by the upwardly mobile middle classes. In some of the formerly elegant sections of American cities eight poor families now live in the space where one family lived a generation ago. For the non-poor this solution offers a further advantage. It reinforces our stereotypes of the poor everytime we see the dilapidated condition of their housing. We not only cast them in the role but provide them the right stage setting to act out the American morality play in which we are the energetic heroes, they the slothful heavies.

The last solution, and the one to which both America and Reston must eventually turn if low-income families are to have housing is some sort of subsidization by the rest of society. A tiny start has been made in this direction by the Johnson Administration. Its financing, however, is still spectacularly inadequate. Its future under the knife of homeric bard and minority leader Dirksen, is uncertain.

Still, all of these programs represent thumb-in-the-dike tactics. They may even obfuscate the real issue: the shameful failure of the world's richest society to abolish the curse of poverty in its midst. The fact is that poor people would not need any of these solutions if their income was higher. If Reston paid waitresses and orderlies more or if they had a guaranteed income base under whatever else they make, they could afford even some of the housing in Reston.

It may have caused us to put too much confidence in solving urban problems by doing this or that to the cities themselves, or by starting all over with new cities. Too much attention focused on cities diverts us from seeing the simple unwillingness of Americans to distribute their vast store of income, privileges and opportunities more equitably. This, not "the city," is our real challenge. Until we face it we cannot expect even as imaginative and competent a man as Robert Simon to create us a new world.

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BLOOD AND GUTS

THE SCREEN

Cinema is often at its best in adventure-and-action films. But with the vogue now for big, expensive, super-duper spectacles, the adventure-and-action stuff has fallen off a bit, mainly because it can be done just as well in little movies that won't risk millions and have to appeal to both adults and kids. Two lengthy, elaborate, wide-screen spectaculars jammed with derring-do and peril are now on our screens. And the interesting thing about them, although both cost well in the millions, neither is aimed at the kiddie trade or is even suitable for youngsters. Whether adults will go for this rich, rather specialized fare remains to be seen.

The better of the two is "The Sand Pebbles" which is based on Richard McKenna's novel about the men on the American gunboat *San Pablo* in 1926 revolutionary China. Gathering a good cast and expert technicians, producer-director Robert Wise took them all to Taiwan and Hong Kong which were used for the Yangtze River and Shanghai harbor locales in Joseph MacDonald's handsome color photography. The confusion in China of the 1920s is well set forth in the portrait of poverty and political uprising and activities of the Nationalists, Communists, warlords, as well as the foreigners there to protect their own interests. And the story concentrates on the American foreigners, the men of the *San Pablo,* who are following instructions in patrolling the Yangtze, and the missionaries, who wish the Navy would let them alone to do their work.

Holman, the main hero of this saga, who is portrayed by Steve McQueen with sensitivity and strength, is a loner, a man in love with machines who has learned to turn to engines after people have let him down. When he firsts lands on the *San Pablo,* he is shocked to find that coolies do all the work, not only because this allows the crew to live like lords, but also because it is the Chinese way with foreigners who are willing to pay and give the coolies their bowl of rice. When Holman rebels because he wants to run his own beloved engines, he wins the ire of both coolies and sailors. But Holman is no fool: he selects a new young boss coolie, and the scenes in which he teaches him about engines and steam are a delight. Equally exciting is the episode in which this young coolie (nicely played by Mako) fights a bullying sailor. But neither delightful nor exciting is the later scene in which this coolie is captured on land by Chinese rebels and tortured—until Holman shoots him, from the ship, to end the lad's excruciating pain.

As times goes on Holman softens a bit toward his fellow sailors and is even led into a suggestion of romance with a missionary-teacher who is underplayed by Candice Bergen as if she wonders what on earth she's doing in China and becoming interested in this hard, cynical sailor. The film's other romance comes through with more emotion when Holman's buddy (Richard Attenborough) saves a lovely Oriental girl from prostitution and marries her in a ceremony of their own making. But in "The Sand Pebbles" romance is only secondary. Robert Wise is making an action film, and it has plenty of fights, escapes, chases, and one terrific battle scene as the *San Pablo* runs through an enemy blockade.

But the film has more than that as the Chinese keep telling the Yanks to go home, and the Yanks (with Richard Crenna in a fine performance as the ship's captain and American spokesman) keep insisting that they must hang around and save all Americans, even those that don't want to be rescued. Although "The Sand Pebbles" is set in 1926, its parallel with today's Vietnam is obvious. And perhaps its message about the futility of American interference will get through in a rousing action picture like this—even to moviegoers who think we should fight in Vietnam to the last soldier.

I'm not sure what the message is meant to be in "Grand Prix," but since airplane movies and racing movies (even with horses) are my unfavorites, I approached this three-hour session with no great hopes. I must say that John Frankenheimer has directed the best auto racing movie to date. Also the noisiest; and between the magnificent shots of cars zooming through nine races to compete for world championship and the sounds made by these cars, which are amplified on the sound track, the innocent spectator is likely to earn himself an earache.

Despite all the excitement and beautiful photography (and Lionel Linden's color camera work is first rate), there isn't much that can be done with racing pictures to get away from the sameness that pervades all these movies. Frankenheimer tries—with some excellent split-screen innovations on the enormous Cinerama screen, and with a story involving the racers with their women. The optical effects done by Saul Bass and others are stunning; and in a short would have held us spellbound from beginning to end.

The script, however, by Robert Alan Aurthur, is something else again—and seems to consist mostly of another arrangement of musical beds played by these stalwart, death-defying racers and the women who can't resist them. Among the former are James Garner, Yves Montand, Brian Bedford, Antonio Sabato, and several others. And the fascinated women include Eva Marie Saint, Genevieve Page, Jessica Walter and Françoise Hardy. Interested only in the business aspect of the whole thing is that fine Japanese star, Toshiro Mifune. Your interest in all this depends on how much you care—not about people, but about racing cars and the sight and sound of them going like a bat out of hell. PHILIP T. HARTUNG

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BOOKS

Old assault on new morality

Morality and Situation Ethics

DIETRICH & ALICE VON HILDEBRAND

Franciscan Herald Press, $4.50

CHARLES E. CURRAN

Morality and Situation Ethics contains the same introduction, eleven chapters, and appendix which were originally published by the David McKay Company in 1955 under the title *True Morality and Its Counterfeits*. The only differences in the present volume are a one-page preface by Bernard Häring and an eleven page epilogue signed by Alice von Hildebrand. A comparison reveals that the same plates were used by the new publishers. The purchaser who only later discerns the origin of the present volume might be tempted to add his own epilogue to *True Morality and Its Counterfeits*!

The book readily betrays its age and fails to enter into the dialogue currently taking place about norms and the context in Christian ethics. The volume concentrates on two modern ethical errors: circumstance or existential ethics and sin mysticism. The von Hildebrands admit there is some truth in these ethical movements, but they try "to refute in detail the disastrous errors that circumstance ethics and sin mysticism embody. . . ."

The authors willingly admit the aberrations of pharisaism and self-righteousness against which sin mysticism has reacted. They admit characteristics in the tragic sinner which make him, at least in one sense, more Christian than the self-righteous observer of the letter of the law. However, sin mysticism exaggerates the *felix culpa*. Only if the sinner has turned his sin into conversion can one speak of a *felix culpa*. The true Christian is always conscious of his sinfulness, and Christian humility saves him from self-righteousness. Sinning itself does not produce humility nor serve as a necessary protection against pharisaism. In general, the authors have handled the problem of sin mysticism quite capably, although they neglected to mention the healing and creative aspects of the grace of the Paschal Mystery. Personally, I do not think that sin mysticism has ever been a significant factor in the American moral ethos. The pragmatic and activist American mentality is not prone to sin mysticism.

The consideration of circumstance or situation ethics is not satisfactory. The authors show that moral theology is not legalistic and does not neglect the elements of intentionality and personal involvement. Also, the von Hildebrands point out the weaknesses present in some situationists; e.g., an aversion to any type of moral obligation, an improper understanding of the nature of human freedom and the freedom of the children of God. However, the authors, like many Catholic theologians, too quickly condemn the proponents of situation ethics as subjectivists and antinomians. At least today such a rejection is not accurate. All situationists cannot be accused of "radical subjectivism." One cannot truly assert that "if matters were as circumstance ethics claims, no moral pattern would exist, no moral claims. . . ." The current dissatisfaction with an emphasis on absolutes in moral theology at least shows the need for a true dialogue with the situationists. Unfortunately, no real dialogue takes place in *Morality and Situation Ethics*.

The book does not develop at any length the theory of moral values which von Hildebrand has discussed elsewhere. Perhaps in a theory of moral values there is a bridge between the absolutism of traditional moral theology and the legitimate claims of the situationists. Most men would admit moral values, some of which are more important than others. But it is a long step from the existence of moral values to the absolute character of some values. Values might furnish *prima facie* principles, but such norms would always be open to the demands of other values. For instance, Archbishop Hurley has recently asked theologians to recognize a principle of the overriding right which would definitely temper the absolutism of the manuals of moral theology.

The authors in the beginning of the book, by virtue of the principle *ex stercore aurum*—gold from the dunghill—had admitted there were some good points in situation ethics. However, in the Epilogue, Alice von Hildebrand fails to see any value in the theory of situation ethics proposed by Joseph Fletcher. Although the author points out some of the weaknesses and even contradictions in Fletcher's book, her apologetic and polemical purposes prevent her from entering into dialogue with him. In the new epilogue, as well as in the entire volume, the authors do not even seem to be asking the proper questions. Consequently, the book contributes very little to the contemporary debate over the role of absolutes in moral theology.

The New Theologian

VED MEHTA

Harper & Row, $5.95

W. RICHARD COMSTOCK

In *The New Theologian* Ved Mehta calls attention to the emergence of an expanding "middle-class literate public" demanding a new kind of popular literature of ideas. One newspaperman is quoted as saying: "We have a duty to air ideas with any public interest at all; that is just good journalism." Ved Mehta then expresses his concern about the "unhealthy offshoots" of such a situation. In the search for entertainment and exciting controversy, issues are too often blurred and "any glimmerings of truth that emerge from the clash of ideas, any demonstrated rights and wrongs of the issue, are lost."

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The irony of this passage lies in the fact that Ved Mehta's last two books—*The Fly in the Fly Bottle* (1963) and the present volume—are paradigms of the very "middle class literate" journalism to which he has referred. The former applied the techniques of the intelligent reporter to an account of contemporary British philosophy. Now in *The New Theologian* (compiled from three articles appearing in the *New Yorker* in 1965) Ved Mehta focuses on the present ferment in Protestant theology as it has emerged in John Robinson's popular tract *Honest to God*.

After reviewing the book and the controversy that followed, Ved Mehta interviews nearly every figure who is a determining influence on Robinson's thought or who is connected in some significant way with its basic approach. The result discloses both the strengths and limitations of a journalistic method that attends primarily to "surfaces": in this case, the surfaces of the thinkers themselves, described with precision in their day-to-day personal and social contexts, and also the direct surfaces of their thoughts and ideas offered as immediate and isolated items of interest. Thus, it is great fun to be told that Paul Van Buren, when offered his choice of drinking Heineken, Carlsberg, Schlitz or Rheingold, chose Rheingold. We learn that Karl Barth now takes an occasional plate of snails, a taste he acquired five years ago. We are intrigued by a phone conversation that takes place while Ved Mehta is interviewing Paul Tillich: "This is Professor Tillich. . . . No, you've got the wrong number."

Humor is not only achieved by a juxtaposition of the trivial with the important. The serious ideas themselves are made to appear quaint and vaguely amusing by being treated as discrete entities cut off from any wider context of thought and meaning. The reporter affects a disarming naivete, uncorrupted by experience. For example, when he turns for enlightenment to a typical theological journal, he is immediately overwhelmed by a rapid succession of distinct and bizarre themes: "Scientific Hermeneutics according to St. Thomas Aquinas," "An eighth-century Melkite Colophon from Edessa," "A Lost Hebrew Word in Isaiah II:6." Curiouser and curiouser becomes this two-dimensional stream of items comprising the strange new world of the New Theologian.

Of course Ved Mehta's underlying purpose is to move from these immediate images of his cultivated naivete to a final holistic understanding of what the ferment is all about. Unfortunately, at the end of his pilgrimage from interview to interview, we are left with a still unresolved succession of discrete images, thoughts, arguments, observations. Nevertheless some significant critique does emerge.

The best account of the historical context is found in generous selections from a perceptive article by Langdon Gilkey. The analyses of Antony Flew, Alasdaire MacIntyre and David Jenkins are summarized with the obvious approval of the reporter. The gist of the critique is that Robinson and his three mentors—Tillich, Rudolf Bultmann and Dietrich Bonhoeffer—are muddled and guilty of equivocation that borders on dishonesty. Either their references to a ground of being, a de-mythological deity, a depth to existence, retain crucial elements of the traditional personal external God that they purport to reject, or else they are really humanistic atheists retaining the aura of a religious language to which they have no right. Their own overtly stated position is felt to be an incoherent half-way house between these two options.

Behind Ved Mehta's reservations concerning *Honest to God* is his suspicion that it involves the abandonment of some kind of normative Christianity committed to miracles as literal intrusions of celestial power into the mundane world. Also he has little sympathy with the concern for an existential or personal appropriation of faith into "this worldly" existence. Citing Bonhoeffer's admonition to the Christian to "drink the earthly cup to the lees" and to allow Christ to "take hold of a man in the center of his life," Ved Mehta is oblivious to the emotion of Christian piety pervading the passage and responds with the observation that it is "so unmistakably this worldly" in its implications that it "becomes difficult to remember that what is under discussion is Christianity."

However, the last section of the book devoted mainly to Bonhoeffer's life is the most valuable part of this uneven survey. Here the journalistic techniques rise above trivia. Interviews with Pastors Bethge and Zimmerman, letters from family and friends, selections from Bonhoeffer's works, are combined into a sketch of Dietrich's life that almost, but not quite, reaches the stature of a portrait.

Unfortunately the climax is marred by two final pages of summation which would have been better omitted. Assessment of the New Theology through references to the "treacherous," "doubting," "denying," "eccentric" and "heretic" Christians who have always been with us is not helpful. To connect the theme of Bonhoeffer's "worldly Christian" with "the doings of some of the popes in lustier times" is evidence of gross misunderstanding. Thus the final issue of this "this worldly" journalistic approach is entertainment marked by occasional but unsustained insight.

Church-State Relations in Ecumenical Perspective

EDIT. ELWYN A. SMITH

Duquesne University Press, $4.95

THOMAS G. SANDERS

No questions divide the major American religious traditions more acrimoniously than those commonly called "church-state." The distinguishing mark of a church-state issue is that it entails the interests and convictions of one religious group in conflict with the interests

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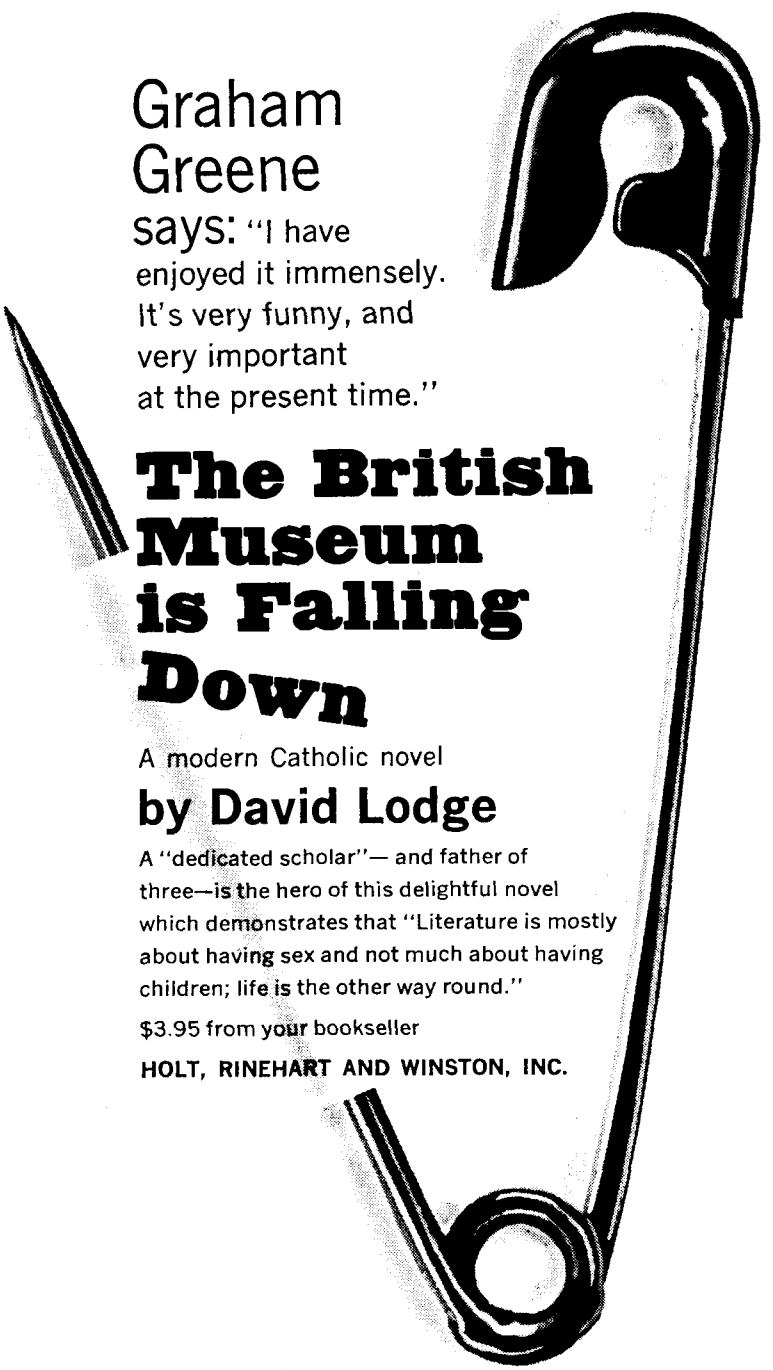
and convictions of other religious groups or with the commitments of government. The articulation of these issues has frequently been carried out with little mutual understanding and even with hostility. The intention of Duquesne University is thus commendable in bringing together papers by Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish scholars on various aspects of the relations of church and state. The result, *Church-State Relations in Ecumenical Perspective*, comprises eleven essays in four areas: the relation of ecumenism to recent social change, the religious meaning of community for civil life, natural law, and American legal issues.

As individual efforts the essays are useful works of scholarship and analysis.

Daniel Callahan starts off the volume with a thoughtful interpretation of secularity and ecumenism, in which he suggests that "an ecumenical Christianity can help mankind to realize the inherent strengths and possibilities of secularization." Leonard Swidler follows with a highly critical account of the way in which the Catholic Church traditionally handled its relations with the state and with non-Catholics. Praising the emergence of a more open attitude toward other religions in recent Church teaching, he emphasizes the effect that living in pluralistic societies has had on ecumenism and Catholic renewal. Encounter between Catholics and Protestants has demanded rethinking of church-state positions on the part of both traditions. Arthur Gilbert discusses "Jewish commitments" on church and state irenically and perceptively. Gilbert holds that where Jews have been in a majority (as in Israel), they have tended to assume privileges for religion in a way not too different from Protestants and Catholics in majority situations. Following up this sociological insight, he contends that the prevailing Jewish attitude in the United States stems more from their minority status than from clear convictions; "fear and defensiveness seem more significant than religious insight in shaping the Jewish position."

Father John L. McKenzie outlines "Biblical Concepts of Community and State" in a scholarly, unexceptionable manner. Michael Novak's "Moral Society and Immoral Man" is devoted basically to the role of communities in the formation of ethical life. In a pregnant suggestion he feels that less attention should be devoted to church and state, and more to the religious community and the open society. Both the open church and open society support diversity in order to enhance communities, where men learn what agape and living together are. A healthy culture is marked by conversation among men who participate in diverse communities but reach out in mutual respect to each other.

The issue of natural law is approached historically. Markus Barth, discussing the concept in St. Paul, argues so strongly that it is not central to his ethics that he verges on underestimating the implications of Paul's actual use of it. Michael Strasser sets out Thomas Aquinas' view of natural law, presenting in fresh terms a topic that has frequently been covered by other interpreters, but rarely with Strasser's clarity. And Arthur C. Coch-


Graham Greene says: "I have enjoyed it immensely. It's very funny, and very important at the present time."
The British Museum is Falling Down
A modern Catholic novel
by David Lodge
A "dedicated scholar"— and father of three—is the hero of this delightful novel which demonstrates that "Literature is mostly about having sex and not much about having children; life is the other way round."
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rane learnedly elucidates Calvin's understanding of natural law, showing how the complexity of the Reformer's terminology has led to diverse interpretations and indicating its significance for Calvin's doctrines of God's sovereignty and the nature of man.

The volume concludes with three legal discussions. Leo Pfeffer persuasively describes how a conflict has developed between contractual relations, status, and the demands of the welfare state. "American government," he says, "will go far to preserve the integrity of free conscience when it poses some threat to the concerns of the community. Nevertheless, where the threat to communal welfare is clear, immediate and grave, the Supreme Court has ruled often and unambiguously that societal needs are paramount." Dean M. Kelley points to some serious problems in the appropriation by religious bodies of leadership and financial aid in governmental assistance programs. Elwyn Smith discusses the relationship of religion to conscience in constitutional law, a topic of great interest in light of the recent Seeger case. Smith shows that Congress and the courts have moved from a criterion of religion to religiousness in allowing for conscientious objection, but that a dilemma remains for the courts to solve, by which citizens can object on purely conscientious grounds without every man's becoming a law to himself.

Unfortunately, taken as a whole the book does not measure up to the dialogue one would expect from the title. In the Introduction the editor implies that the real topic might be "joint inquiry into the civil conditions which answer to the character, purposes, and needs of religion itself." However, the precise relation of the individual essays to that topic or to "church-state relations" is not clearly specified. For example, the implications of the historical discussions of natural law are left to the imagination, and it would require someone with more competence in the whole field of church-state relations to draw the lines than most of the readers of this book will have.

Nor does the "ecumenical perspective" come out very well. Naturally, the authors would not be expected to arrive at a common view, but the similarities and differences of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews might have been indicated in some way by the essayists or the editor so that the reader could see what the real issues are. The contributions skate by each other, without comparison or engagement. The reader is left mystified as to the distinctive concerns and characteristics of these religious traditions supposedly in ecumenical conversation. As disparate essays, the volume is well worth reading, but its lack of direction and internal relation prevent it from achieving its seeming intention, a presentation of church-state relations in an ecumenical perspective.

The Birds Fall Down

REBECCA WEST

Viking, $5.95

JEAN HOLZHAUER

In our literary generation, the subject of treason belongs to Dame Rebecca West. She has been wise in her choice. At no point in history has the question of loyalty occurred more urgently to each man than today, in the time of shifting family structure, merging communities, religious reinterpretation, the superseding of national by international concerns.

Based on a real episode in pre-World War I history, *The Birds Fall Down* illustrates as well as any modern British story of spies and counter-spies the dilemma posed by espionage: if one is in a position to know the secrets of opposing forces, is it morally possible to feel that one of these forces has the greater right to them, on any ground other than the accident of birth? Dame Rebecca's Russian revolutionaries are sorely torn: committed to the "people's" cause, they are unable to shake off their experiential attachment to old friends and patrons among the "white" Russian aristocracy.

They end in ambiguity, spying against both the Czarist enemy and each other. It is what one might expect of professional liars and thieves, according to Nikolai, the patriarchal nobleman bellowing his support of Mother Russia in Parisian exile. But such simplicity will not do; exposed to more complex adversity, Nikolai suffers a stroke and dies, leaving his 18-year-old, half-English granddaughter to fend for herself in the web of traitors.

Clear-eyed, already beginning to be disillusioned by her father's adultery, Laura fends as best she knows. She is wary and clever, sophisticated well beyond her years; yet she is 18. Through a total misreading of one part of the situation, she causes a spy to be murdered as he is on his way to propose marriage to her. Innocently triumphant after his death, she remarks to her mother,

"What sort of woman would Kamensky have married? Only a woman like himself, dishonest and a murderer."

Dame Rebecca's statement seems to be that no human being can escape treachery to something, wilfully or otherwise. It is a suggestion worth pondering.

The Face of Another

KOBO ABÉ

Knopf, $4.95

LOUIS ALLEN

"All races are concerned with the way they look," writes the Japanese historian, Professor Yuji Aida, in his book *Prisoner of the British*, "but there is something abnormal in the way we Japanese are concerned about this. . . . The fact that our language contains so many admonitory expressions about not being taken in by looks alone is probably a proof that we do in fact rely far too much on outward appearances." Kobo Abé's novel is an extended commentary on this text, by means of a *reductio ad absurdum*: a "loss of face" in the literal sense, and an attempt to replace it which ends in tragedy.

The narrator is the head of a laboratory, whose face has been so badly burned in a liquid oxygen explosion that it is nothing more than a mass of keloid scars, so appalling to look upon that he constantly wears bandages, both at home and at work, in order to make living with other people possible. At first, he tries to carry off his metamorphosis with

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an assumed heartiness, hoping to encourage his colleagues to treat him normally; but their stilted carefulness soon makes him aware that pity, mingled with repugnance, inhibits any normal relationship. The roadway to others, as he calls it, has been closed, most painfully of all in the case of his wife, with whom nearly all real communication has come to an end.

To reopen the roadway to her, he decides to wear a mask, and after consulting a plastic surgeon, is faced at once by the problem of what face to choose. It cannot be his own, since the perfect texture he needs can only be copied from a living face. So the mask, however successful technically, will impose a new personality upon the old. He visits an exhibition of Noh Masks, and sees one reduced almost to the frame of the skull: the audience lends it expression and he concludes that the nature of the self must be imposed from without, by others. The Sartrean overtones of this dependence on others for consent to one's own being persist until a chance meeting, which has all the shameful, bullying furtiveness of a random homosexual encounter, provides a model for the desired mask.

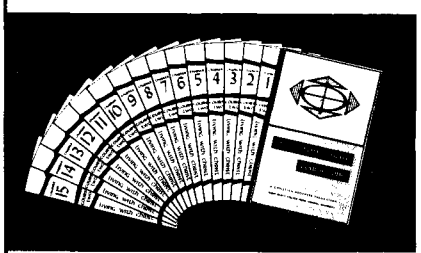
Once made, the mask—and here Abé descends into the banal—begins to impose a form of its own on the wearer. Along with a new, confident independence, he feels himself becoming crafty and lecherous, and his agonized need for his wife turns into an attempt to test the reality of her love by attempting to seduce her, while wearing the disguise of his new face. He succeeds only too well.

But the structure of the narrative is not a simple linear one: the whole time he has been experimenting with masks, he has recorded events and his reactions to them in a diary which, towards the end of the book, he leaves behind in their house for his wife to read (a device which *aficionados* of the modern Japanese novel are bound to compare with Tanizaki's use of the same method of self-discovery and self-revelation in *The Key*). As his new self, he has given his wife a rendezvous in another house, and the book actually begins as he is waiting to hear her footsteps on the stairs.

Near the end, we return to this moment in time, as if in expectation of a *dénouement*. But in the strict sense there is none, or at least not the melodramatic one which the narrative appeared to be leading up to. In fact, his wife had been undeceived throughout, and does not turn up at the rendezvous. He returns home to find she has left a note accusing him of monstrous selfishness in manipulating her in order to reflect himself: "While you spoke of the face as being some kind of roadway between fellow human beings, you were like a snail that thinks only of its own doorway. . . . You don't need me. What you really need is a mirror. Because any stranger for you is simply a mirror in which to reflect yourself. I don't ever again want to return to such a desert of mirrors."

The narrator refuses to accept her verdict. "Thinking only of oneself is forever a result, never a cause," he writes. "No matter how much television dramas go on singing the cloying praises of the family, it is the outside world, full

HIGH SCHOOL Religion TEXTS



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of enemies and lechers, that passes on a man's worth, pays his wages, and guarantees him the right to live. . . . Loneliness is terrible, of course, but being betrayed by the mask of one's fellow man is much worse." Angered by his wife's preference for her own wounded pride, he puts on the mask again and goes out into the night streets to commit a crime.

Kobo Abé is already well known in America and Europe for his novel *Woman of the Dunes*, and both this and the novel under review have been successfully filmed by Teshigahara. Yet, in spite of this director's skill, Abé's prose seems much more capable than film is of transmitting the claustrophobia of the individual captured by society and life (*Woman of the Dunes*) and hemmed in by himself (*Face of Another*). The narrator and his wife remain anonymous throughout and the reader is gradually drawn into the suffocating interior of the scarred face, itching with new beard or bathed in sweat, and into the cage of the narrator's mind. Perhaps the analysis of the philosophy of the faceless self is occasionally prolix—the exposition of the situation and its outcome might have profited from being tautened into a *novella* rather than drawn out into a full-scale novel; but the obsession with the prison of the face, as with the sand in *Woman of the Dunes*, becomes, in the end, hallucinatory.

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CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 415)

If a firm stand in Vietnam now can help contain Communism and *prevent* a global conflict, the means are in proportion to the end achieved. A worldwide conflict would involve hundreds of millions of people and be the equivalent of a thousand Vietnams. An unconditional surrender in Vietnam may well set the stage for such a global war. Millions of Chinese were liquidated while Mao was establishing his regime, and over six million Jews were killed by the Nazis. The tragedy of Vietnam, terrible as it is, does not loom as outsize as your editorial presents it to be. ELMO E. CRUMP

Orange, Conn.

To the Editors: Apparently a policy of helping an oppressed people to preserve their freedom is acceptable if it does not cause us too much inconvenience but when the going gets rough—let's get out. I think we're getting a little soft when the preservation of our wealth and comfort takes precedence over aid to a persecuted neighbor. FRANK SULLIVAN

Calexico, Calif.

To the Editors: Your editorial advising that the United States withdraw from Vietnam was undoubtedly the result of much debate and soul-searching. I am sure it is painful for you—as it is for the writer of this letter—to be forced by your conscience to place yourselves in categoric opposition to the policy of our elected government in regard to Vietnam.

Even if it doesn't lead to all-out nuclear war—a very real possibility—this policy is utterly and completely wrong. If it continues to prevail, we will emerge from the conflict a drastically weakened and divided nation. Regardless of the eventual military outcome, the U.S. role in Vietnam is proving to be the gravest moral and political mistake in our history. ROBERT M. MAYHEW

Montebello, Calif.

To the Editors: Your editorial seemed quite illogical, and your position untenable.

Your opening assertion, i.e., that the United States should withdraw from Vietnam even at the cost of a Communist victory because "the war is an unjust one," and because what is being done there is a "crime" and a "sin," loses impact as the reader discovers the obvious absence of substantiating arguments, and in its place, a mere repetition of unproved assertion that the war is a crime, a sin and unjust. . . .

It must be stated, as the declarations of the Conference of Catholic Bishops points out, that all factions involved in the war must work with ever increasing effort to bring about negotiations at the conference table. It is well known that our nation has made, and is continuing to make sincere efforts along this line. However, until this is possible, a wholesale withdrawal or a withdrawal under even minimal Communist terms, would be the crime, sin, and injustice which you label our present involvement in the war. GERALD W. BOYD

"The Christian Image"

Iowa City, Ia.

To the Editors: Regarding the "suppressed hysteria" in that "zealous, naive and frequently incoherent as a freshman theme" book, *The Christian Image* (by Justus George Lawler, reviewed by Carol Johnson, Dec. 9), it might be a service to those who won't buy the book to let them know they can read most of it elsewhere; one chapter appeared in the

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wild and ranting pages of *Worship*; a second, in that white-hot vehicle of rabid evangelism, *The Downside Review*; a third, in the militant, crusading *Thought*; parts of a fourth in the ultra-orthodox *Continuum* and fiery *Review of Metaphysics*; and the last was a paper read before a seething bunch of wild-eyed zealots at a positively blood-boiling session of the National Council on Religion in Higher Education. It is reliably reported that after the paper, Mr. Lawler's auditors spent the rest of the day exterminating unbelievers.

PHYLLIS R. JANIK

"Steady Work"

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: I would have hoped that you would have provided equal space in which Irving Howe, Michael Harrington, Bayard Rustin, or someone else of their point of view might have answered the polemic against them in your December 9 issue. Emile Capouya's purported book review of Howe's *Steady Work* was pure polemic, and of a not too serious sort, at that.

Capouya's alternative to the political strategy that Howe and others have put forward is ". . . the courage to stand apart while the nation is acting disgracefully." That is a strategy for literary critics—not for the Negro, the poor, or the people of Vietnam. The radical intellectuals can always, as a California Negro is reported to have recently remarked, shave their beards and go back to Great Neck after standing apart while Reagan and the like take power.

We are indeed faced with a difficult and tragic situation—on the international as well as the domestic fronts. Still, there is vital work to be done, both in defending the meager, bitterly-won gains of recent years, and in laying the groundwork for a new movement of the Negro, the poor, labor, and other potentially progressive forces that can go beyond civil rights to seriously challenge the basic economic and political causes of injustice in our society. There is little bravado in this, and under these trying circumstances some middle-class radicals will choose to drop out. I admire Howe and the others for their willingness to accept, for the moment, the grim necessities of this situation; to support a Brown over a Reagan, or in those areas where the choices are better, a liberal Democrat over a moderate Republican. And I am sure that as our generation gains political experience it will come to value Irving Howe and others like him far above radicals who are today counseling escape from the hard realities of politics.

PENN KEMBLE
National Chairman,
Young Peoples' Socialist League

Anti-Poverty Election

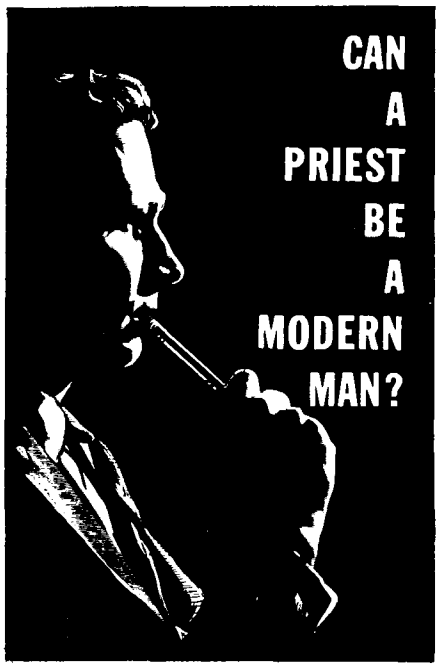
New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: John Leo should walk the streets of the Lower East Side and talk with some residents before repeating the stock propaganda put out by losers of the June 5th anti-poverty election. ("News and Views," Dec. 9.) No one in our community seriously doubts that democratic procedures were followed, and not one of Mr. Leo's criticisms were raised this week by Mobilization For Youth or by the more than one hundred residents who braved the rain to hear the Anti-Poverty Committee's progress-report and to give their opinions. In fact, a representative of the Human Resources Administration was heard to comment on the peacefulness of this open meeting.

But peace has been a hard-won goal. Apparently the group of artists in the neighborhood of Immaculate Conception Church, mentioned in "News and Views," somehow managed for the two years prior to June 5th to stay out of earshot of the anti-poverty bickering and squabbling which kept most residents awake nights and produced three mass meetings leading to a fourth community rally of 1,000 which chose a steering committee and ordered them to spend eight months advertising anti-poverty and arranging for the June 5th election.

Would Mr. Leo prefer that Churchmen of the Lower East Side not brush shoulders so closely with the secular community? When will *Commonweal's* thinking mature beyond the level of the *Village Voice*?

(MR.) ANTHONY CROCE, S.J.



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